

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 L/-03 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 AID-20 PA-04

USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 CU-04 OMB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07

OPIC-12 DRC-01 /114 W

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R 080057Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SEC*TATE WASHDC 9529

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN, TH

SUBJECT: CONTINUED OPPOSITION TO SECOND AIRPORT

REF: A) BANGKOK 19665; B) BANGKOK 16799, OCT 29, 1973;

C) BANGKOK 17632, NOV 12, 1973;

D) STATE 227140, NOVEMBER 17, 1973

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.

1. PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF OPPOSITION TO NORTHROP AIRPORT CONTRACT BEING INTENSIFIED, PARTICULARLY BY STUDENTS. PANEL DISCUSSION ON SECOND AIRPORT PROJECT HELD AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY JANUARY 5 ATTRACTED CAPACITY CROWD WHO LISTENED TO PRO AND CON VIEWS FOR FOUR AND ONE HALF HOURS WITH MAJORITY SENTIMENT STRONGLY AGAINST NORTHROP CONTRACT, ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS. PRESS HAS ALSO CARRIED ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS SHOWING STUDENTS ON JANUARY 5 HANGING BLACK CLOTH AND SPECIAL WREATH IN FRONT OF AIRPORT BUILDING AT DON MUANG TO DEMONSTRATE OPPOSITION TO SECOND AIRPORT CONTRACT. NATION JANUARY 6 CARRIED ARTICLE REPORTING DEFENSE MINISTER AIR CHIEF MARSHAL DAWEЕ AS STATING THAT ALTHOUGH HE FAVORED SECOND AIRPORT HE PREFERRED ANOTHER SITE THAN NONG NGU HAO. DAWEЕ ALSO, ACCORDING TO SAME ARTICLE, CHARGED THAT GENERAL PONGSE HAD PURCHASED LARGE AMOUNT OF LAND IN THE AREA OF PROPOSED SECOND AIRPORT WHEN

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HE SERVED HIS FIRST TERM AS COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER ABOUT 10 YEARS

AGO. (PONSE SERVED A SECOND TERM IN SAME POSITION UNTIL OCTOBER REVOLUTION, IT WAS ALSO PONSE WHO SIGNED AIRPORT CONTRACT WITH NORTHROP IN EARLY 1973.)

2. CABINET MEMBERS CHALEE FOR COMMUNICATIONS, OSOT KOSIN FOR INDUSTRY AND DEPUTY MINISTER DR. SOMPHOP HOTRAKIT FOR JUSTICE HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED BY CABINET TO MEET WITH STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES ON JANUARY 7 TO EXPLAIN GOVERNMENT'S STAND ON NORTHROP CONTRACT, ACCORDING TO NATION ARTICLE FOR SAME DAY. THE MEETING IS TO BE RECORDED ON TAPE AND SUBSEQUENTLY BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO, ACCORDING TO SAME ARTICLE THAT GAVE SECRETARY TO MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AS THE SOURCE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. COMMENT: RTG OBVIOUSLY SENSITIVE TO STUDENT ATTITUDES ON THIS AS ON MANY OTHER ISSUES, AND APPARENTLY HOPES TO DISARM THE OPPONENTS BY POLICY OF OPEN AND FRANK DISCUSSION. FOR GOVERNMENT TO ABANDON PROJECT AT THIS LATE STAGE WOULD REPRESENT SERIOUS LOSS OF PRESTIGE AND EMBASSY BELIEVES UNLIKELY TO OCCUR.

4. LONG STANDING EMBASSY POLICY HAS BEEN TO PROVIDE NORTHROP NORMAL COMMERCIAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO ANY LEGITIMATE AMERICAN COMPANY INTERESTED IN DOING BUSINESS IN THAILAND, BUT IN ALL OTHER WAYS TO AVOID PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN AIRPORT CONTROVERSY. THAI PRES IS NOT CURRENTLY LINKING US GOVERNMENT WITH SPONSORSHIP OF PROJECT, ALTHOUGH PAST ARTICLES BY AT LEAST ONE NON-THAI JOURNAL (FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW) HAVE SOUGHT TO ESTABLISH THIS LINK VIA EXIM BANK AND MR. KEARNS (REFTEL B). OPIC POLITICAL GUARANTEE BEING SOUGHT BY NORTHROP IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF POTENTIAL FOR CHARGE THAT USG IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED (REFTELS C AND D). EMBASSY, INCLUDING USOM, INCIDENTALLY, DOES NOT HAVE RESOURCES TO MAKE KIND OF ASSESSMENT STUDY OF THIS PROJECT THAT OPIC HAS BEEN SUGGESTING.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND AND GROWING CRITICISM OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF US OFFICIAL PRESENCE IN THAILAND, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE KNOWING CURRENT WASHINGTON ASSESSMENT OF NORTHROP CONTRACT, IN PARTICULAR CURRENT EXIM BANK POLICY TOWARD NORTHROP REQUEST FOR FINANCING.
KINTNER

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